# SUNCAT Benefits and Impact Survey 2012

Introduction

SUNCAT conducted this online survey between October 2011 and January 2012 to ascertain information about:

- Who is using the service
- How the service is being used
- How SUNCAT benefits users
- The current level of satisfaction with the service
- How users would like to see the service develop

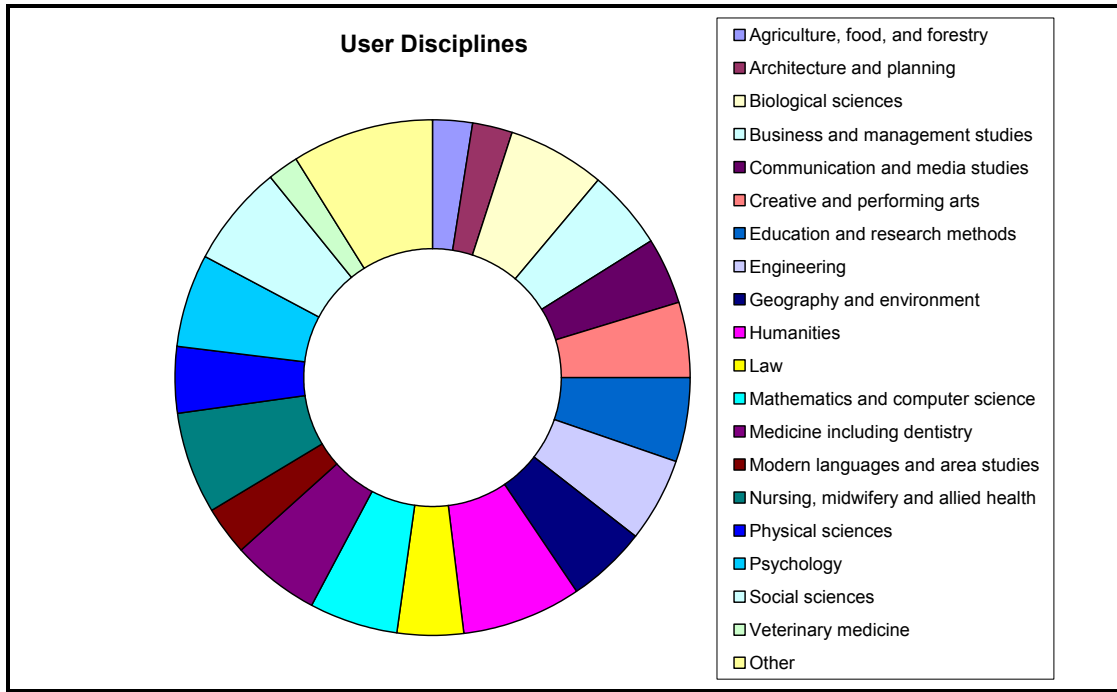## Uptake by Discipline, Role and Purpose

Role

One hundred respondents completed the survey, with most of them, 81%, identifying themselves as Library/Information Professionals. A further 9% as Postgraduate Students or Researchers, 8% as Undergraduate Students and the remaining two respondents identifying themselves as Retired and as a Library User.

User Roles

Legend:
- Information professional
- Student
- Postgraduate student
- Researcher
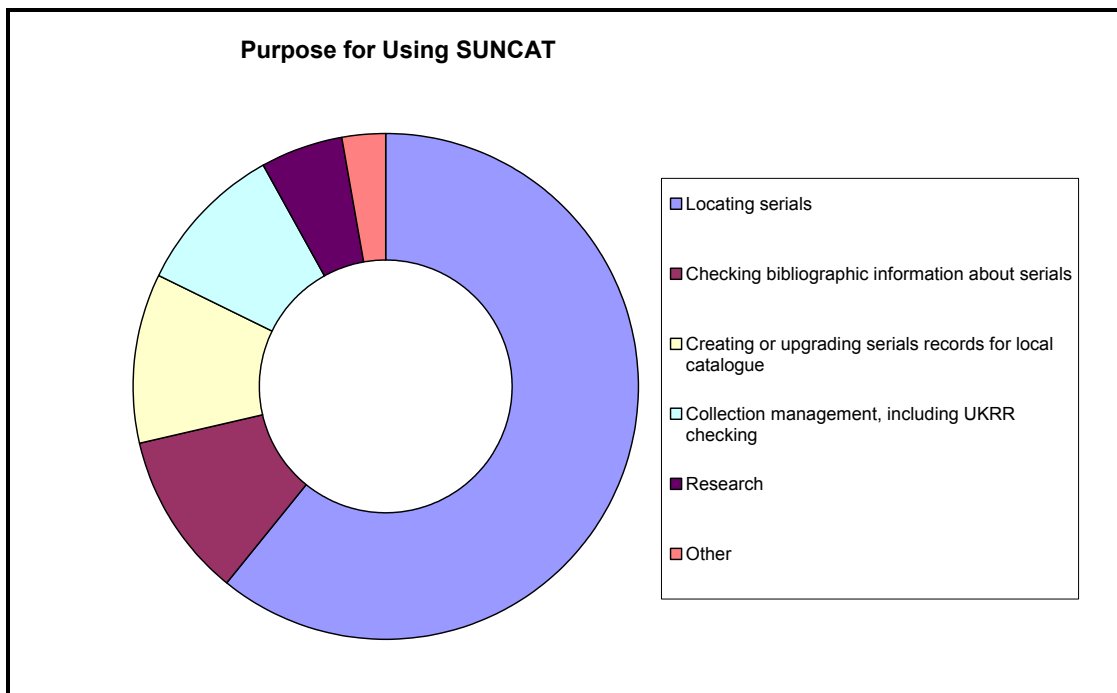- Retired
- Library User
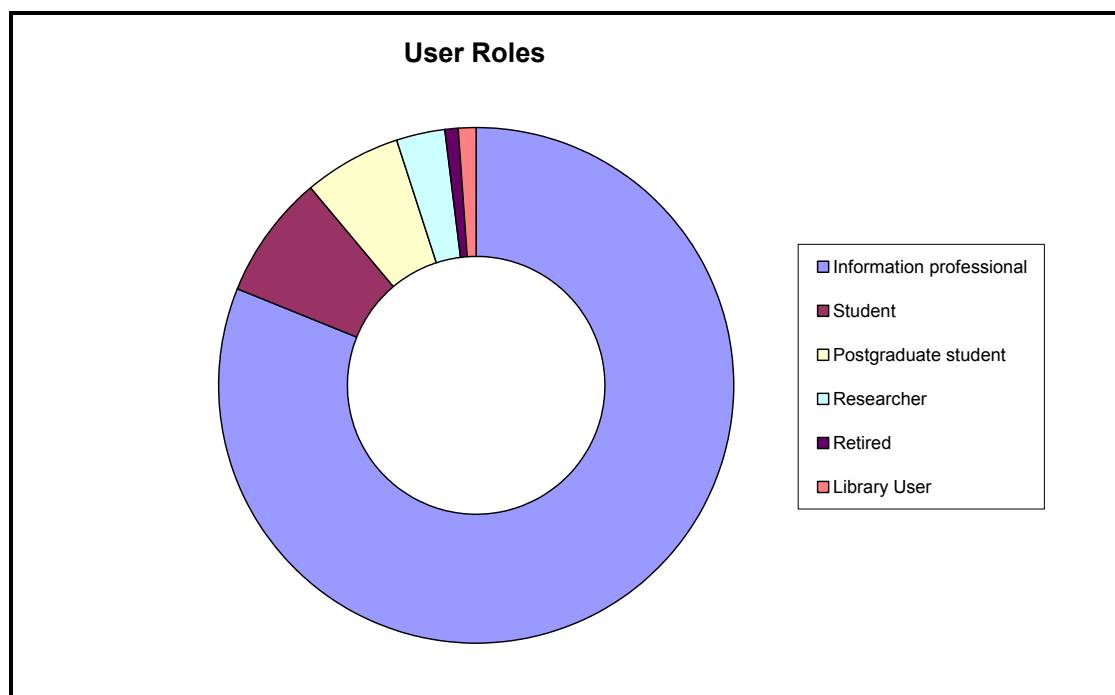
Discipline

Seventy percent of respondents reported working across more than one subject area, with a large number working across a wide range of disciplines. Of the 33 responses falling under 'Other', a significant percentage stated that their use of SUNCAT was library work and multi-discipline. These results reflect the high number of respondents who identified themselves as information professionals (see above), who often work in a multi-disciplinary environment.

User Disciplines

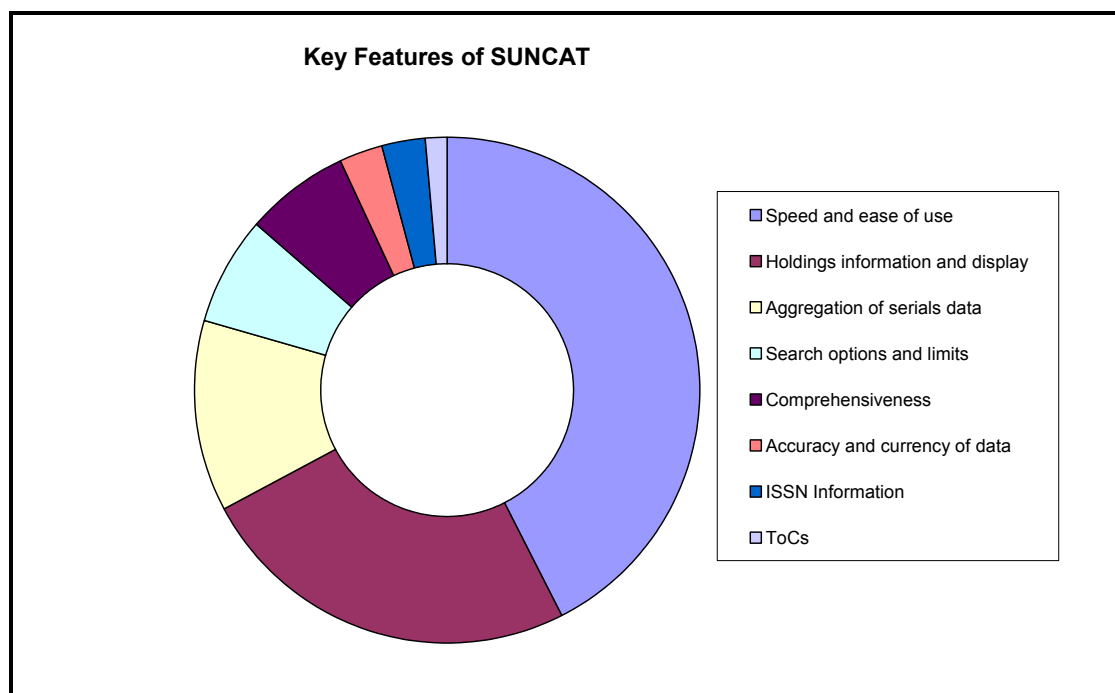|	
■	Agriculture, food, and forestry
■	Architecture and planning
□	Biological sciences
□	Business and management studies
■	Communication and media studies
■	Creative and performing arts
■	Education and research methods
□	Engineering
■	Geography and environment
■	Humanities
□	Law
■	Mathematics and computer science
■	Medicine including dentistry
■	Modern languages and area studies
■	Nursing, midwifery and allied health
■	Physical sciences
■	Psychology
□	Social sciences
□	Veterinary medicine
□	Other

Purposes for Using SUNCAT

A number of key themes emerged from the range of purposes provided by respondents. The majority, 68%, unsurprisingly related to locating serials. However, other reasons related to checking bibliographic information; upgrading records in local library catalogues and cross checking other libraries' holdings for collection management purposes.

Purpose for Using SUNCAT

□	Locating serials
■	Checking bibliographic information about serials
□	Creating or upgrading serials records for local catalogue
□	Collection management, including UKRR checking
■	Research
■	Other

Key Features of SUNCAT

The most popular features highlighted by respondents were the speed and ease of use of the service, followed by the serials holdings information and display.

Connected with the latter, respondents also commented on the usefulness of having aggregated data and the comprehensive coverage SUNCAT supplies.

Key Features of SUNCAT

- Speed and ease of use
- Holdings information and display
- Aggregation of serials data
- Search options and limits
- Comprehensiveness
- Accuracy and currency of data
- ISSN Information
- ToCs

"Speed with which I can search and its comprehensive lists."

"I find it very easy to get the information I need - I especially like that it shows clearly what print copies institutions have, or whether or not they are electronic only."

"You can reset searches. The website is very clear and it is easy to work out which library has paper copies and which electronic. You don't have to check lots of different records. Plus you are increasing the number of libraries covered. I use it several times a day and don't know what I would do without it. Thank you."

"There are so many search options which you can use, it just makes my job so much easier! I also like the way that all of the library records are summarised into a single list - in other databases like COPAC you would need to click on each university record individually to see their holdings - this would be time consuming."

Ease of Use

The majority of respondents, 77% reported that SUNCAT was either "Easy" or "Very Easy" to use. Only six respondents indicated that the service was "Difficult" to use.

How Do You Find Using SUNCAT?

Legend:
- Very easy
- Easy
- Neither easy nor difficult
- Difficult
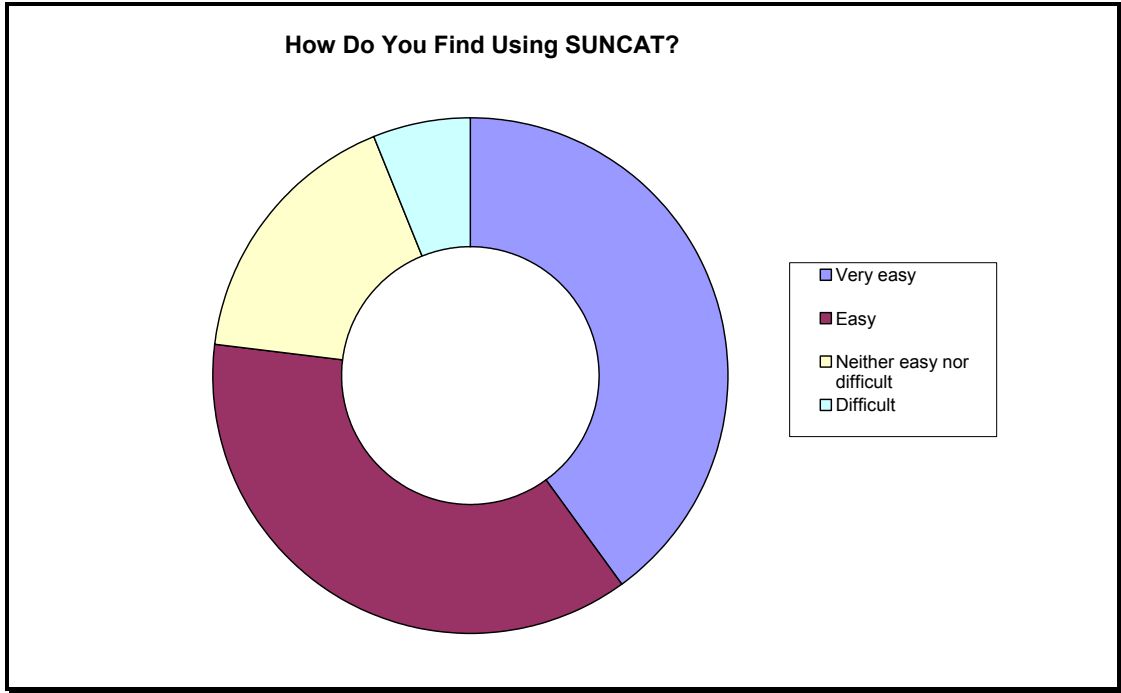
Cost and or Time Saving

Eighty-two percent of respondents either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" that their work would take longer without SUNCAT. Only 5% reported that their work would not take longer.

SUNCAT Saves Me Time

Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
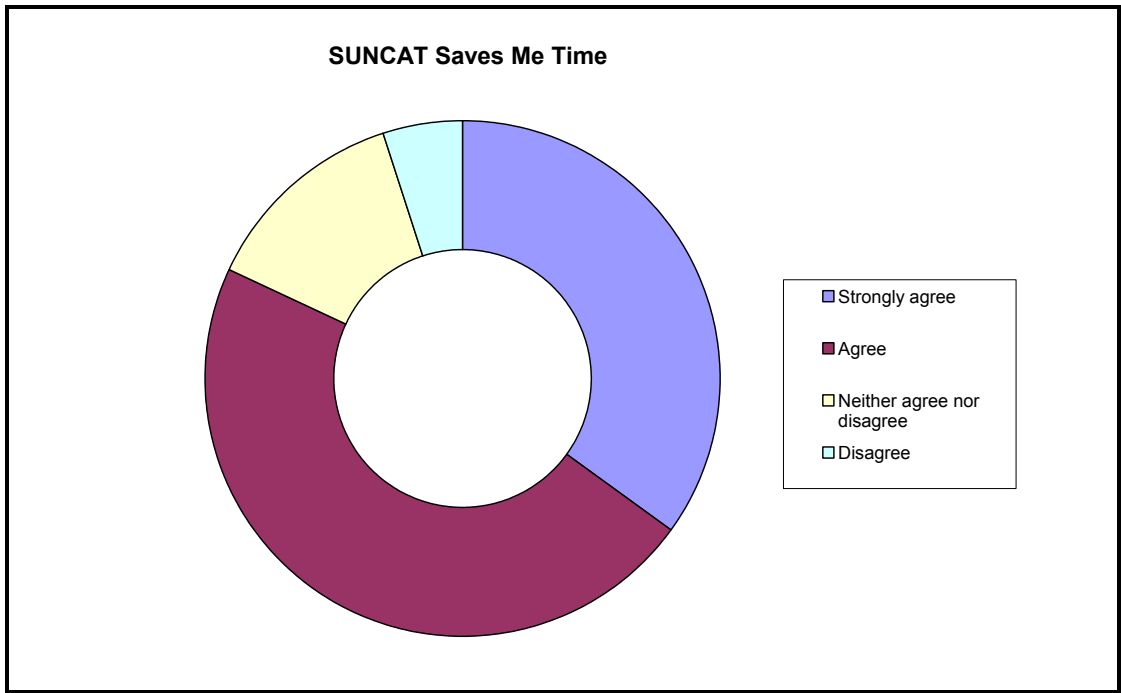
The main reasons reported as to how or why SUNCAT saved respondents' time included:

- That it provides an aggregation of serials information in one source
- That it provides reliable and quality information
- The service is easy to use and provides quick access to information

- The service is quicker and/or better than alternative sources of serials information
- That it is a dedicated source of serials information

"Since the British Library experienced delays to their service because of asbestos removal we have found that a lot of our inter-library loan requests cannot be accessed. SUNCAT allows us to search many other UK universities quickly, easily and cheaply to find out where we may access this document. The BL also offer this search service but it is costly and can take a long time to yield results, though it is quite thorough. SUNCAT allows us to give our readers responses almost straight away, which is great."

"Searching multiple online library catalogues would be so time consuming as to be impracticable."

"Finding alternative locations to the British Library for ILL requests would take such a long time without Suncat that it would not be efficient for us to do this."

"If not for Suncat I would spend a lot of my time trying to locate material"

"More than my work taking longer, the quality of my work (catalogue records) would be lower"

"It's the first point of call when searching for journal holdings to ensure the details are correct, along with finding a potential supplier."

Perceived Quality of Information (Relevance, Coverage and Usefulness)

Most of the respondents, 84% indicated that they would recommend SUNCAT to others. None of the respondents indicated that they would not recommend SUNCAT.

Would You Recommend SUNCAT?

□ Strongly agree
■ Agree
□ Neither agree or disagree
□ Disagree
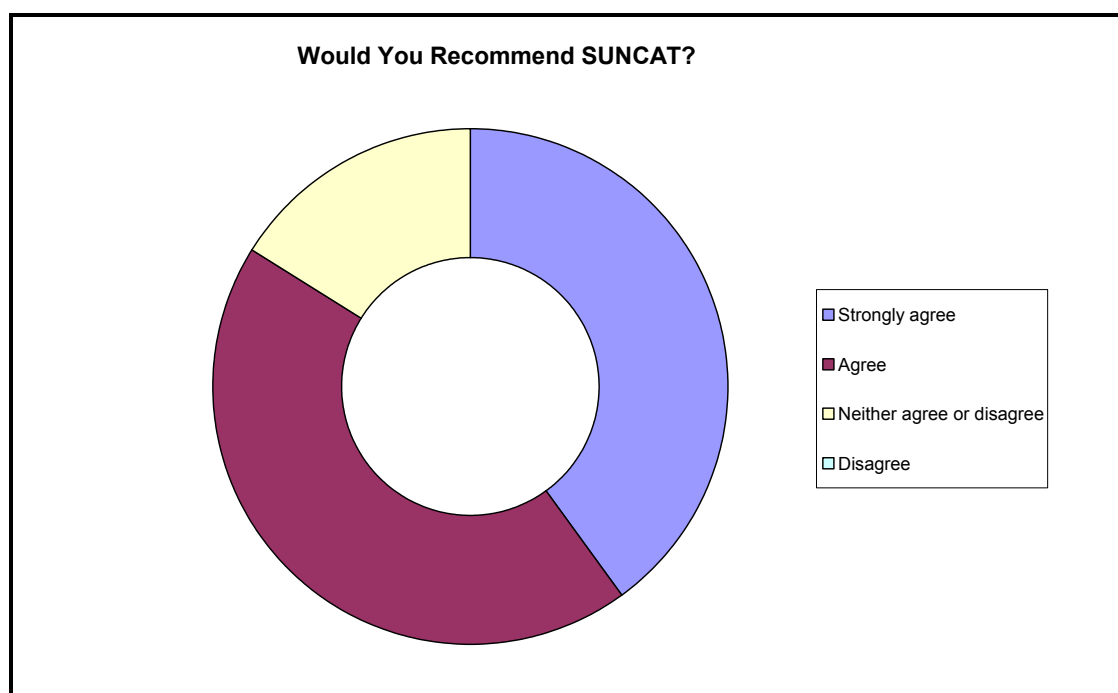
The main reasons reported for recommending SUNCAT included:

- The speed and ease of use of the service
- That it provides information about the location of serials
- That it provides information about serials in general
- That it provides an aggregation and comprehensive coverage of serials holdings and information
- That it is a useful and free professional tool
- That it is a good source of serials records

"I often recommend it to readers for serials queries. It is clear, fast and simple to use."

"It's easy to use, has a broad scope of materials held, and is very simple to use. I recommend it to students as well as library staff."

"Great Resource - we link to it from our Netvibes page in order to encourage patrons to search different catalogues before making requests."

"Good resource for serial description and location"

"For fellow cataloguers it is indispensable"

Alternative Services if SUNCAT were not available

Seventy-one percent of respondents indicated that they would need to use an alternative service if SUNCAT was not available.

Would you use an alternative if SUNCAT was not available?

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- Don't know
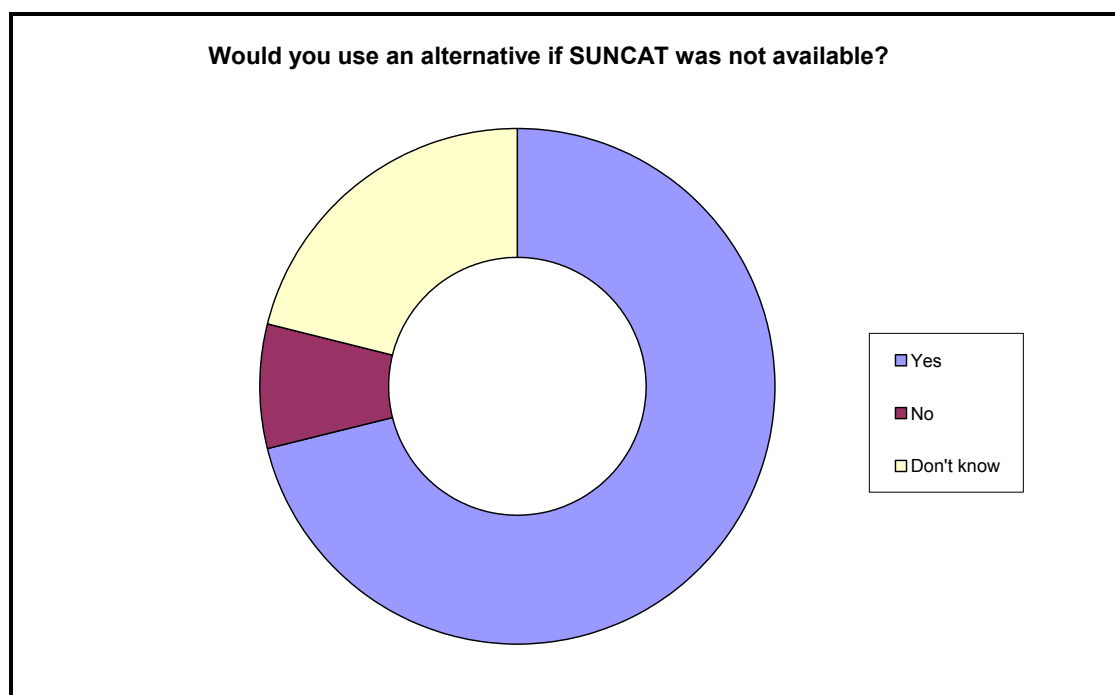
The most popular alternatives listed included:

- COPAC
- OCLC/WorldCat
- Inform25

- Individual library catalogues
- SALSER
- British Library
- CONSER

"Would try to find one, but SUNCAT is BRILLIANT."

"That is too horrible to think about. It would have to be a combination of COPAC, M25 etc I guess."

"We would be restricted to using Copac, which does not offer the same range of information. Our work would suffer because of this."

"I would have to. I would use Copac/M25/BL but none of these provide easily accessible information, regarding issn/journal details/and holdings of so many libraries."

"Possibly COPAC or Worldcat, but having a dedicated Serials catalogue is much better."

Desirable Improvements for SUNCAT

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to suggest how SUNCAT could be improved or developed in the future. Forty percent of respondents provided some suggestions and the most popular of these related to the following themes:

- Reduce duplication
- Improve search options/limits, e.g. introduce filters for print/electronic serials; restrict data searched in title and ISSN searches
- Improve holdings display, e.g. alphabetise libraries listed; create a clearer differentiation between print and electronic holdings

The remaining suggestions centred around the following improvements:

- Provide additional information, e.g. link directly to library catalogues; make list of contributing libraries more obvious; indicate where electronic holdings are available for inter-library loan
- Increase number of contributing libraries
- Improve interface design, e.g. change font used; improve navigation between results pages
- Increase frequency of data updates
- Improve the speed of the service

Summary and Comments

Although the survey received a good number of completed responses the results should be considered in the context of the respondents' grouping or designation. Almost all of the respondents were library or information professionals with only a handful of end-users, e.g. researchers, lecturers, postgraduates providing responses. In this respect the survey provides a useful insight into the use of SUNCAT as a professional tool and the benefits for these users and their opinions on potential improvements for the service.

SUNCAT's primary aim as a location tool was confirmed with two thirds of respondents stating this as their primary purpose for using the service.

The key features highlighted by the respondents included its speed and ease of use, plus the benefit of having a comprehensive aggregation of serials bibliographic and holdings data. The importance given to these features corresponds with the type of usage of SUNCAT mentioned above.

The vast majority of respondents stated that SUNCAT is not only easy or very easy to use but that it saves them time and that they would recommend the service to others.

In relation to desirable improvements for the service the overall results highlight that the professional users of SUNCAT are largely happy with the service. However, one major issue highlighted, that of duplication, is particularly difficult to resolve. Duplication is a common problem across union catalogues. The major reason for duplication in SUNCAT is due to the variation in data provided by the Contributing Libraries. This variation in data makes it extremely difficult to match records for the same title together. The issue of variable serials data quality pre-dates SUNCAT and will continue into the foreseeable future. The SUNCAT team are aware of the importance of this issue and are continuing to make efforts to improve the quality of data in SUNCAT in the long term and to alleviate the effects of duplication on the service in the shorter term.

With regard to the remaining suggestions from respondents the SUNCAT team are continuing to expand the coverage of the service, with three new libraries added since the survey was closed and more in the pipeline throughout 2012.

Regular updates are agreed with each contributing library with the frequency and last update date recorded at http://www.suncat.ac.uk/description/currency.shtml. The most common frequency is monthly, however where libraries make very few changes to their records, less regular schedules, e.g. quarterly, have been set. A small number of libraries are behind their updating schedule and the SUNCAT team makes every effort to encourage these libraries to provide updates as soon as possible.

A small number of respondents, around 2%, requested that the speed of the service be improved. However, this contrasts with a much larger number of users who reported satisfaction with the speed and ease of use of the service. Speed of response is monitored closely for the service and on average 99% of SUNCAT searches take less than 5 seconds to complete. Anytime the speed of searches consistently falls below this level, the SUNCAT team work to resolve any underlying issues as quickly as possible. In general, broad keyword searches can take longer to perform so users are encouraged to keep searches as specific as possible.

The remaining suggestions related to the search options; the holdings display; providing additional information and the interface in general will be investigated by the SUNCAT team, and where feasible, added to a list of requirements to be included in development work during 2012 and beyond.